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ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Washington, DC 20515-6115**

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November 26, 2007

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Julie Louise Gerberding, M.D., M.P.H.  
Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and  
Administrator, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry  
1825 Century Blvd.  
Atlanta, GA 30345

Dear Dr. Gerberding:

We are writing to you regarding the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's (Agency) apparent failure to conduct recommended public health evaluations and studies of communities known to have been exposed to high levels of trichloroethylene around hazardous waste sites.

As you know, the Agency is engaged in an extensive multi-year public health assessment of exposures to residents at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, in an effort to review possible links between birth defects and exposures to trichloroethylene and other volatile organic compounds. Given this focus, we are concerned that the Agency has failed to complete or act on health recommendations and studies at other military and civilian hazardous waste sites where similar exposures have occurred.

We had previously written to obtain exposure information for military bases where trichloroethylene contamination was identified in finished drinking water and in groundwater used as a source of drinking water (see attached). Among the several military facilities where exposures have occurred, the highest levels of contamination include the Wurtsmith Air Force Base in Michigan and the New Brighton/Arden Hills Ammunition Plant in Minnesota. Several other military bases have experienced lower levels of trichloroethylene contamination in tap water, but at concentrations higher than the Environmental Protection Agency's limit for drinking water levels. These facilities include the Cornhusker Army Ammunition Plant (Nebraska) the Fairchild Air Force Base (Washington), Fort Riley (Kansas), and the McClelland Air Force Base (California).

In its 2001 Public Health Assessment for the Wurtsmith Air Force Base, the Agency identified exposures to trichloroethylene of 1,100 parts per billion in drinking water. These concentrations were observed in on-base housing. According to the 2001 report, the Agency assumes that trichloroethylene concentrations of 1,100 parts per billion occurred continuously between 1962 and 1977. These levels of exposures are consistent with what was observed at Camp Lejeune; however, we are not aware of any further health studies conducted at Wurtsmith Air Force Base following the 2001 Public Health Assessment.


At New Brighton/Arden Hills Ammunition Plant, the Public Health Assessment completed by the Agency identified tap water concentrations of trichloroethylene at 440 parts per billion, and one private well had concentrations as high as 7,000 parts per billion. The Agency determined that a community health investigation on neurobehavioral function was needed, as well as a health statistics review focusing on cancers and birth defects. We understand from Agency staff that a statistics review for cancers and birth defects was completed; however, the investigation of neurobehavioral function was never conducted.


There also are several civilian sites where trichloroethylene exposures have occurred due to past contamination of major water supply systems. Specifically, the San Gabriel Valley site in the Los Angeles Metropolitan area and the San Fernando Valley site around North Hollywood had extensive trichloroethylene contamination in drinking water as late as 1985. In its March 1993 Public Health Assessment for the San Gabriel Valley site, the Agency recommended that "further evaluation of the site is needed in order to address possible past exposure to groundwater contaminants." The assessment specifically recommended a health consultation to review sources of contamination and associated exposures as well as a retrospective assessment of past exposures. It is our understanding that these recommendations were never acted upon. Similarly, the August 1992 Site Review of the San Fernando Valley site also recommended that "further evaluation of the site is needed in order to address possible past exposure to groundwater contaminants." We asked Agency staff if this recommendation was followed, but no information was provided to confirm whether these evaluations occurred.

We believe there may be many other sites with outstanding or incomplete health recommendations made by the Agency. Therefore, we ask that you review the specific sites referenced in this letter and the status of Agency recommendations for them, and report back to us on whether the Agency plans to follow through on its recommendations. We also ask that you review every hazardous waste site where the Agency identified a completed exposure pathway, and report back to us on whether follow-up public health actions were recommended by the Agency, and whether those recommendations were completed.

Please provide us with a response to these requests by November 30, 2007. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Mr. Dwight Cates of the Minority Committee Staff at (202) 226-2439.

Sincerely,

  
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Joe Barton  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy and Commerce

  
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Ed Whitfield  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

cc: The Honorable John D. Dingell, Chairman  
The Honorable Bart Stupak, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations